Return to Born Eunuchs Library

PSEUDO-LUCIAN

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

Introductory notes and translation by A.M. Harmon (Loeb edition).

> "...It is obvious from the style of this dialogue that the author is not Lucian but an imitator. When it was written is uncertain..." (A.M. Harmon)

AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

LYCINUS

1. Theomnestus, my friend, since dawn your sportive talk about love has filled these ears of mine that were weary of unremitting attention to serious topics. As I was parched with thirst for relaxation of this sort, your delightful stream of merry stories was very welcome to me. For the human spirit is too weak to endure serious pursuits all the time, and ambitious toils long to gain some little respite from tiresome cares and to have freedom for the joys of life. This morning I have been quite gladdened by the sweet winning seductiveness of your wanton stories, so that I almost thought I was Aristides being enchanted beyond measure by those Milesian Tales, and I swear by those Loves of yours that have found so broad a target that I am indeed sorry that you've come to the end of your stories. If you think this is but idle talk on my part, I beg you in the name of Aphrodite herself, if you've omitted mention of any of your love affairs with a lad or even with a girl, coax it forth with the aid of memory. Besides we are celebrating a festival today and sacrificing to Heracles. You know well enough, I'm sure, how impetuous that god was where love was concerned, and so I think he'll be most delighted to receive your stories by way of an offering.

THEOMNESTUS

2. You would find it quicker, my dear Lycinus, to count me the waves of the sea or the flakes of a snowstorm than to count my loves. For I for my part think that their quiver has been left completely empty and, if they choose to fly off in quest of one more victim, their weaponless right arms will be laughed to scorn. For, almost from the time when I left off being a boy and was accounted a young man, I have been beguiled by one passion after another. One Love has ever succeeded another, and almost before I've ended earlier ones later Loves begin. They are veritable Lernean heads appearing in greater multiplicity than on the self-regenerating Hydra, and no Iolaüs can help against them. For one flame is not extinguished by another. There dwells in my eyes so nimble a gadfly that it pounces on any and every beauty as its prey and is never sated enough to stop. And I am always wondering why Aphrodite bears me this grudge. For I am no child of the Sun, nor am I puffed up with the insolence of the Lemnian women or the boorish contempt of Hippolytus that I should have provoked this unceasing wrath on the part of the goddess.

LYCINUS

3. Stop this affected and unpleasant play-acting, Theomnestus. Are you really annoyed that Fortune has allotted you the life you have ? Do you think it a hardship that you associate with women at their fairest and boys at the flower of their beauty ? But perhaps you'll actually need to take purges for so unpleasant an ailment. For you do suffer shockingly, I must say. Why won't you get all this nonsense out of your system and think yourself fortunate that god has not given you for your lot squalid husbandry or the wanderings of a merchant or a soldier's life under arms ? But your interests are in the oily wrestling-schools, in resplendent clothes that shed luxury right down to your feet, and in seeing that your hair is fashionably dressed. The very torment of your amorous yearnings delights you and you find sweetness in the bite of passion's tooth. For when you have tempted you hope, and when you have won your suit you take your pleasure, but get as much pleasure from future joys as from the present. Just now at any rate, when you were going through in Hesiodic fashion the long catalogue of your loves from the beginning, the merry glances of your eyes grew meltingly liquid, and, giving your voice a delicate sweetness so that it matched that of the daughter of Lycambes, you made it immediately plain from your very manner that you were in love not only with your loves but also with their memory. Come, if there is any scrap of your voyage in the seas of love that you have omitted, reveal everything, and make your sacrifice to Heracles complete and perfect.

THEOMNESTUS

4. Heracles is a devourer of oxen, my dear Lycinus, and takes very little pleasure, they say, in sacrifices that have no savoury smoke. But we are honouring his annual feast with discourse. Accordingly, as my narratives have continued since dawn and lasted too long, let your Muse, departing from her customary seriousness, spend the day in merriment along with the god, and, as I can see you incline to neither type of passion, prove yourself, I beg, an impartial judge. Decide whether you consider those superior who love boys or those who delight in womankind. For I who have been smitten by both passions hang like an accurate balance with both scales in equipoise. But you, being unaffected by either, will choose the better of the two by using the impartial judgement of your reason. Away with all coyness, my dear friend, and cast now the vote entrusted to you in your capacity as judge of my loves.

LYCINUS

5. My dear Theomnestus, do you imagine that my narratives are a matter of sport and laughter ? No, they promise something serious too. I at any rate have undertaken this task on the spur of the moment, because I've known it to be far from a laughing matter ever since the time I heard two men arguing heatedly with each other about these two types of love, and I still have the memory of it ringing in my ears. They were opposites, not only in their arguments but in their passions, unlike you who, thanks to your easy-going spirit, go sleepless and earn double wages, "One as a herdsman of cattle, another as tender of white flocks." On the contrary, one took excessive delight in boys and thought love of women a pit of doom, while the other, virgin of all love of males, was highly susceptible to women. So I presided over a contest between these two warring passions and found the occasion quite indescribably delightful. The imprint of their words remains inscribed in my ears almost as though they had been spoken a moment ago. Therefore, putting aside all pretexts for being excused this task, I shall retail to you exactly what I heard the two of them say.

THEOMNESTUS

Well, I shall get up from here and sit facing you, "waiting the time when Aeacus' son makes an end of his singing." But you must unfold for us in song the old and glorious lays of the contest of loves.

LYCINUS

6. I had in mind going to Italy and a swift ship had been made ready for me. It was one of the doublebanked vessels which seem particularly to be used by the Liburnians, a race who live along the Ionian Gulf. After paying such respects as I could to the local gods and invoking Zeus, God of Strangers, to assist propitiously in my expedition to foreign parts, I left the town and drove down to the sea with a pair of mules. Then I bade farewell to those who were escorting me, for I was followed by a throng of determined scholars who kept talking to me and parted with me reluctantly. Well, I climbed on to the poop and took my seat near the helmsman. We were

soon carried away from land by the surge of our oars and, since we had very favourable breezes astern, we raised the mast from the hold and ran the yard up to the masthead. Then we let all our canvas down over the sheets and, as our sail gently filled, we went whistling along just as loud, I fancy, as an arrow does, and flew through the waves which roared around our prow as it cut through them.

7. But it isn't the time to describe at any length the events serious or light of the intervening coastal voyage. But, when we had passed the Cilician seaboard and were in the gulf of Pamphylia, after passing with some difficulty the Swallow Islands, those fortune-favoured limits of ancient Greece, we visited each of the Lycian cities, where we found our chief pleasure in the tales told, for no vestige of prosperity is visible in them to the eye. Eventually we made Rhodes, the island of the Sun-God, and decided to take a short rest from our uninterrupted voyaging.

8. Accordingly our oarsmen hauled the ship ashore and pitched their tents nearby. I had been provided with accommodation opposite the temple of Dionysus, and, as I strolled along unhurriedly, I was filled with an extraordinary pleasure. For it really is the city of Helius with a beauty in keeping with that god. As I walked round the porticos in the temple of Dionysus, I examined each painting, not only delighting my eyes but also renewing my acquaintance with the tales of the heroes. For immediately two or three fellows rushed up to me, offering for a small fee to explain every story for me, though most of what they said I had already guessed for myself.

9. When I had now had my fill of sightseeing and was minded to go to my lodgings, I met with the most delightful of all blessings in a strange land, old acquaintances of long standing, whom I think you also know yourself, for you've often seen them visiting us here, Charicles a young man from Corinth who is not only handsome but shows some evidence of skilful use of cosmetics, because, I imagine, he wishes to attract the women, and with him Callicratidas, the Athenian, a man of straightforward ways. For he was pre-eminent among the leading figures in public speaking and in this forensic oratory of ours. He was also a devotee of physical training, though in my opinion he was only fond of the wrestling-schools because of his love for boys. For he was enthusiastic only for that, while his hatred for women made him often curse Prometheus. Well, they both saw me from a distance and hurried up to me overjoyed and delighted. Then, as so often happens, each of them clasped me by the hand and begged me to visit his house. I, seeing that they were carrying their rivalry too far, said, "Today, Callicratidas and Charicles, it is the proper thing for both of you to be my guests so that you may not fan your rivalry into greater flame. But on the days to follow -- for I've decided to remain here for three or four days -- you will return my hospitality by entertaining me each in turn, drawing lots to decide which of you will start."

10. This was agreed, and for that day I presided as host, while on the next day Callicratidas did so, and after him Charicles. Now, even when they were entertaining me, I could see concrete evidence of the inclinations of each. For my Athenian friend was well provided with handsome slave-boys and all of his servants were. pretty well beardless. They remained with him till the down first appeared on their faces, but, once any growth cast a shadow on their cheeks, they would be sent away to be stewards and overseers of his properties at Athens. Charicles, however, had in attendance a large band of dancing girls and singing girls and all his house was as full of women as if it were the Thesmophoria, with not the slightest trace of male presence except that here and there could be seen an infant boy or a superannuated old cook whose age could give even the jealous no cause for suspicion. Well, these things were themselves, as I said, sufficient indications of the dispositions of both of them. Often, however, short skirmishes broke out between them without the point at issue being settled. But, when it was time for me to put to sea, at their wish I took them with me to share my voyage, for they like me were minded to set out for Italy.

11. Now, as we had decided to anchor at Cnidus to see the temple of Aphrodite, which is famed as possessing the most truly lovely example of Praxiteles' skill, we gently approached the land with the goddess herself, I believe, escorting our ship with smooth calm waters. The others occupied themselves with the usual preparations, but I took the two authorities on love, one on either side of me, and went round Cnidus, finding no little amusement in the wanton products of the potters, for I remembered I was in Aphrodite's city. First we went round the porticos of Sostratus and everywhere else that could give us pleasure and then we walked to the temple of Aphrodite. Charicles and I did so very eagerly, but Callicratidas was reluctant because he was going to see something female, and would have preferred, I imagine, to have had Eros of Thespiae instead of Aphrodite of Cnidus.

12. And immediately, it seemed, there breathed upon us from the sacred precinct itself breezes fraught with love. For the uncovered court was not for the most part paved with smooth slabs of stone to form an unproductive area but, as was to be expected in Aphrodite's temple, was all of it prolific with garden fruits. These trees, luxuriant far and wide with fresh green leaves, roofed in the air around them. But more than all others flourished the berry-laden myrtle growing luxuriantly beside its mistress and all the other trees that are endowed with beauty. Though they were old in years they were not withered or faded but, still in their youthful prime, swelled with fresh sprays. Intermingled with these were trees that were unproductive except for having beauty for their fruit-cypresses and planes that towered to the heavens and with them Daphne, who deserted from Aphrodite and fled from that goddess long ago. But around every tree crept and twined the ivy, devotee of love. Rich vines were hung with their thick clusters of grapes. For Aphrodite is more delightful when accompanied by Dionysus and the gifts of each are sweeter if blended together, but, should they be parted from each other, they afford less pleasure. Under the particularly shady trees were joyous couches for those who wished to feast themselves there. These were occasionally visited by a few folk of breeding, but all the city rabble flocked there on holidays and paid true homage to Aphrodite.

13. When the plants had given us pleasure enough, we entered the temple. In the midst thereof sits the goddess -- she's a most beautiful statue of Parian marble -- arrogantly smiling a little as a grin parts her lips. Draped by no garment, all her beauty is uncovered and revealed, except in so far as she unobtrusively uses one hand to hide her private parts. So great was the power of the craftsman's art that the hard unyielding marble did justice to every limb. Charicles at any rate raised a mad distracted cry and exclaimed, "Happiest indeed of the gods was Ares, who suffered chains because of her!" And, as he spoke, he ran up and, stretching out his neck as far as he could, started to kiss the goddess with importunate lips. Callicratidas stood by in silence with amazement in his heart.

The temple had a door on both sides for the benefit of those also who wish to have a good view of the goddess from behind, so that no part of her be left unadmired. It's easy therefore for people to enter by the other door and survey the beauty of her back.

14. And so we decided to see all of the goddess and went round to the back of the precinct. Then, when the door had been opened by the woman responsible for keeping the keys, we were filled with an immediate wonder for the beauty we beheld. The Athenian who had been so impassive an observer a minute before, upon inspecting those parts of the goddess which recommend a boy, suddenly raised a shout far more frenzied than that of Charicles. "Heracles!" he exclaimed, "what a well-proportioned back! What generous flanks she has! How satisfying an armful to embrace! How delicately moulded the flesh on the buttocks, neither too thin and close to the bone, nor yet revealing too great an expanse of fat! And as for those precious parts sealed in on either side by the hips, how inexpressibly sweetly they smile! How perfect the proportions of the thighs and the shins as they stretch down in a straight line to the feet! So that's what Ganymede looks like as he pours out the nectar in heaven for Zeus and makes it taste sweeter. For I'd never have taken the cup from Hebe if she served me." While Callicratidas was shouting this under the spell of the goddess, Charicles in the excess of his admiration stood almost petrified, though his emotions showed in the melting tears trickling from his eyes.

15. When we could admire no more, we noticed a mark on one thigh like a stain on a dress; the unsightliness of this was shown up by the brightness of the marble everywhere else. I therefore, hazarding a plausible guess about the truth of the matter, supposed that what we saw was a natural defect in the marble. For even such things as these are subject to accident and many potential masterpieces of beauty are thwarted by bad luck. And so, thinking the black mark to be a natural blemish, I found in this too cause to admire Praxiteles for having hidden what was unsightly in the marble in the parts less able to be examined closely. But the attendant woman who was standing near us told us a strange, incredible story. For she said that a young man of a not undistinguished family -- though his deed has caused him to be left nameless -- who often visited the precinct, was so ill-starred as to fall in love with the goddess. He would spend all day in the temple and at first gave the impression of pious awe. For in the morning he would leave his bed long before dawn to go to the temple and only return home reluctantly after sunset. All day long would he sit facing the goddess with his eyes fixed uninterruptedly upon her, whispering indistinctly and carrying on a lover's complaints in secret conversation.

16. But when he wished to give himself some little comfort from his suffering, after first addressing the goddess, he would count out on the table four knuckle-bones of a Libyan gazelle and take a gamble on his expectations. If

he made a successful throw and particularly if ever he was blessed with the throw named after the goddess herself, and no dice showed the same face, he would prostrate himself before the goddess, thinking he would gain his desire. But, if as usually happens he made an indifferent throw on to his table, and the dice revealed an unpropitious result, he would curse all Cnidus and show utter dejection as if at an irremediable disaster; but a minute later he would snatch up the dice and try to cure by another throw his earlier lack of success. But presently, as his passion grew more inflamed, every wall came to be inscribed with his messages and the bark of every tender tree told of fair Aphrodite. Praxiteles was honoured by him as much as Zeus and every beautiful treasure that his home guarded was offered to the goddess. In the end the violent tension of his desires turned to desperation and he found in audacity a procurer for his lusts. For, when the sun was now sinking to its setting, quietly and unnoticed by those present, he slipped in behind the door and, standing invisible in the inmost part of the chamber, he kept still, hardly even breathing. When the attendants closed the door from the outside in the normal way, this new Anchises was locked in. But why do I chatter on and tell you in every detail the reckless deed of that unmentionable night? These marks of his amorous embraces were seen after day came and the goddess had that blemish to prove what she'd suffered. The youth concerned is said, according to the popular story told, to have hurled himself over a cliff or down into the waves of the sea and to have vanished utterly.

17. While the temple-woman was recounting this, Charicles interrupted her account with a shout and said, "Women therefore inspire love even when made of stone. But what would have happened if we had seen such beauty alive and breathing? Would not that single night have been valued as highly as the sceptre of Zeus?"

But Callicratidas smiled and said, "We don't know as yet, Charicles, whether we won't hear many stories of this sort when we come to Thespiae. Even now in this we have a clear proof of the truth about the Aphrodite whom you hold in such esteem."

When Charicles asked how this was, I thought Callicratidas made a very convincing reply. For he said that, although the love-struck youth had seized the chance to enjoy a whole uninterrupted night and had complete liberty to glut his passion, he nevertheless made love to the marble as though to a boy, because, I'm sure, he didn't want to be confronted by the female parts. This occasioned much snarling argument, till I put an end to the confusion and uproar by saying, "Friends, you must keep to orderly enquiry, as is the proper habit of educated people. You must therefore make an end of this disorderly, inconclusive contentiousness and each in turn exert yourself to defend your own opinion; for it's not yet the time to leave for the ship, and we must employ that free time for enjoyment and also for such serious matters as can combine pleasure and profit. Therefore let us leave the temple, since great numbers of the pious are coming in, and let us turn aside into one of the feasting-places, so that we can have peace and quiet to hear and to say whatever we wish. But remember that he who is vanquished will never again vex our ears on similar topics."

18. This suggestion of mine pleased them and after they had agreed to it we left the temple. I was enjoying myself as I was weighed down by no cares, but they were rolling mighty cogitations up and down in their thoughts, as though they were about to compete for the leading place in the processions at Plataea. When we had come to a thickly shaded spot that afforded relief for the summer heat, I said, "This is a pleasant place, for the cicadas chirp melodiously overhead." Then I sat down between them in right judicial manner, bearing on my brows all the gravity of the Heliaea itself. When I had suggested to them that I should draw lots to decide who should speak first, and Charicles had drawn this privilege, I bade him begin the debate at once.

19. He rubbed his brow lightly with his hand and after a short pause began as follows: "To you, Aphrodite, my queen, do my prayers appeal to give help in my advocacy of your cause. For every enterprise attains complete perfection if you shed on it but the faintest degree of the arts of persuasion that are your very own; but discourses on love have particular need of you. For you are their only true mother. Come, you who are the most feminine of all, plead the cause of womankind, and of your grace allow men to remain male, as they were born to be. Therefore do I at the very outset of my discourse call as witness to back my plea the first mother and earliest root of every creature, that sacred origin of all things, I mean, who in the beginning established earth, air, fire and water, the elements of the universe, and, by blending these with each other, brought to life everything that has breath. Knowing that we are something created from perishable matter and that the life-time assigned each of us by fate is but short, she contrived that the death of one thing should be the birth of another and meted out fresh births to compensate for what dies, so that by replacing one another we live for ever. But, since it was impossible

for anything to be born from but a single source, she devised in each species two types. For she allowed males as their peculiar privilege to ejaculate semen, and made females to be a vessel as it were for the reception of seed, and, imbuing both sexes with a common desire, she linked them to each other, ordaining as a sacred law of necessity that each should retain its own nature and that neither should the female grow unnaturally masculine nor the male be unbecomingly soft. For this reason the intercourse of men with women has till this day preserved the life of men by an undying succession, and no man can boast he is the son only of a man; no, people pay equal homage to their mother and to their father, and all honours are still retained equally by these two revered names.

20. In the beginning therefore, since human life was still full of heroic thought and honoured the virtues that kept men close to gods, it obeyed the laws made by nature, and men, linking themselves to women according to the proper limits imposed by age, became fathers of sterling children. But gradually the passing years degenerated from such nobility to the lowest depths of hedonism and cut out strange and extraordinary paths to enjoyment. Then luxury, daring all, transgressed the laws of nature herself. And who ever was the first to look at the male as though at a female after using violence like a tyrant or else shameless persuasion? The same sex entered the same bed. Though they saw themselves embracing each other, they were ashamed neither at what they did nor at what they had done to them, and, sowing their seed, to quote the proverb, on barren rocks they bought a little pleasure at the cost of great disgrace.

21. The daring of some men has advanced so far in tyrannical violence as even to wreak sacrilege upon nature with the knife. By depriving males of their masculinity they have found wider ranges of pleasure. But those who become wretched and luckless in order to be boys for longer remain male no longer, being a perplexing riddle of dual gender, neither being kept for the functions to which they have been born nor yet having the thing into which they have been changed. The bloom that has lingered with them in their youth makes them fade prematurely into old age. For at the same moment they are counted as boys and have become old without any interval of manhood. Thus foul self-indulgence, teacher of every wickedness, devising one shameless pleasure after another, has plunged all the way down to that infection which cannot even be mentioned with decency, in order to leave no area of lust unexplored.

22. If each man abided by the ordinances prescribed for us by Providence, we should be satisfied with intercourse with women and life would be uncorrupted by anything shameful. Certainly, among animals incapable of debasing anything through depravity of disposition the laws of nature are preserved undefiled. Lions have no passion for lions but love in due season evokes in them desire for the females of their kind. The bull, monarch of the herd, mounts cows, and the ram fills the whole flock with seed from the male. Furthermore do not boars seek to lie with sows? Do not wolves mate. with she-wolves? And, to speak in general terms, neither the birds whose wings whir on high, nor the creatures whose lot is a wet one beneath the water nor yet any creatures upon land strive for intercourse with fellow males, but the decisions of Providence remain unchanged. But you who are wrongly praised for wisdom, you beasts truly contemptible, you humans, by what strange infection have you been brought to lawlessness and incited to outrage each other? With what blind insensibility have you engulfed your souls that you have missed the mark in both directions, avoiding what you ought to pursue, and pursuing what you ought to avoid? If each and every man should choose to emulate such conduct, the human race will come to a complete end.

23. But at this point disciples of Socrates can resurrect that wonderful argument by which boys' ears as yet incapable of perfect logic are deceived, though those whose minds have already reached their full powers would not be led astray by them. For they affect a love for the soul and, being ashamed to pay court to bodily beauty, call themselves lovers of virtue. This often tempts me to cackle with laughter. For what is wrong with you, grave philosophers, that you dismiss with scorn what has now long given proof of its quality, and has witnesses to its virtue in its becoming grey hairs and its old age, whereas all your wise love is captivated by the young though their reasonings cannot yet decide to what course they will turn? Or is there a law that all ugliness should be thought guilty of viciousness but that the handsome should automatically be praised as good? But indeed, to quote Homer, the great prophet of truth,

> Although one man is worse in looks,
> His frame God crowns with speech, and men rejoice

To look at him. Unerring does he speak
With charming modesty, pre-eminent
Amid the assembled men; when through the town
He walks, men look at him as 'twere a god.'
And again the poet has spoken with these words:
'You did not then have wits to add to looks.'

Indeed wise Odysseus is praised more than handsome Nireus.

24. How is it then that through you courses no love for wisdom or for justice and the other virtues which have in their allotted station the company of fullgrown men, while beauty in boys excites the most ardent fires of passion in you? No doubt, Plato, one ought to have loved Phaedrus for the sake of Lysias whom he betrayed! Or would it have been right to love the virtue of Alcibiades because he would mutilate statues of the gods and his drunken cries parodied the initiation rites of Eleusis? Who admits to having been in love with the betrayal of Athens, the fortification of Decelea against her, and a life that set its sights on tyranny? But, as godlike Plato says, as long as his beard was not yet fully grown, he was beloved by all. But, after he had passed from boyhood to manhood, during the years when his hitherto immature intellect now had its full powers of reason, he was hated by all. What follows? That it is lovers of youth rather than of wisdom who give honourable names to dishonourable passions and call physical beauty virtue of the soul. But lest I be thought to mention famous men only to vent my hatred, let me say no more on this topic.

25. To quit this highly serious plane and descend somewhat to your level of pleasure, Callicratidas, I shall show that the services rendered by a woman are far superior to those of a boy. In the first place I consider that all kinds of enjoyment give greater delight if of longer duration. For swift pleasure flits by and is gone before we can recognise it, but delights are enhanced by being prolonged. How I wish that stingy fate had allotted us long terms of life and it consisted entirely of unbroken good health with no grief preying on our minds. For then we should spend all our days in feasting and holiday. But, since envious Fortune has grudged us these greater benefits, amongst those that we have the sweetest are those that last. Thus from maidenhood to middle age, before the time when the last wrinkles of old age finally spread over her face, a woman is a pleasant armful for a man to embrace, and, even if the beauty of her prime is past, yet

"With wiser tongue
Experience doth speak than can the young."

26. But the very man who should make attempts on a boy of twenty seems to me to be unnaturally lustful and pursuing an equivocal love. For then the limbs, being large and manly, are hard, the chins that once were soft are rough and covered with bristles, and the well-developed thighs are as it were sullied with hairs. And as for the parts less visible than these, I leave knowledge of them to you who have tried them! But ever does her attractive skin give radiance to every part of a woman and her luxuriant ringlets of hair, hanging down from her head, bloom with a dusky beauty that rivals the hyacinths, some of them streaming over her back to grace her shoulders, and others over her ears and temples curlier by far than the celery in the meadow. But the rest of her person has not a hair growing on it and shines more pellucidly than amber, to quote the proverb, or Sidonian crystal.

27. But why do we not pursue those pleasures that are mutual and bring equal delight to the passive and to the active partners? For, generally speaking, unlike irrational animals we do not find solitary existences acceptable, but we are linked by a sociable fellowship and consider blessings sweeter and hardships lighter when shared. Hence was instituted the table that is shared, and, setting before us the board that is the mediator of friendship, we mete out to our bellies the enjoyment due to them, not drinking Thasian wine, for example, by ourselves, or stuffing ourselves with expensive dishes on our own, but each man thinks pleasant what he enjoys along with another, and in sharing our pleasures we find greater enjoyment. Now men's intercourse with women involves giving like enjoyment in return. For the two sexes part with pleasure only if they have had an equal effect on

each other -- unless we ought rather to heed the verdict of Tiresias that the woman's enjoyment is twice as great as the man's. And I think it honourable for men not to wish for a selfish pleasure or to seek to gain some private benefit by receiving from anyone the sum total of enjoyment, but to share what they obtain and to requite like with like. But no one could be so mad as to say this in the case of boys. No, the active lover, according to his view of the matter, departs after having obtained an exquisite pleasure, but the one outraged suffers pain and tears at first, though the pain relents somewhat with time and you will, men say, cause him no further discomfort, but of pleasure he has none at all. And, if I may make a rather far-fetched point, but one I should make as we are in the precinct of Aphrodite, a woman, Callicratidas, may be used like a boy, so that one can have enjoyment by opening up two paths to pleasure, but a male has no way of bestowing the pleasure a woman gives.

28. Therefore, if even men like you, Callicratidas, can find satisfaction in women, let us males fence ourselves off from each other; but, if males find intercourse with males acceptable, henceforth let women too love each other. Come now, epoch of the future, legislator of strange pleasures, devise fresh paths for male lusts, but bestow the same privilege upon women, and let them have intercourse with each other just as men do. Let them strap to themselves cunningly contrived instruments of lechery, those mysterious monstrosities devoid of seed, and let woman lie with woman as does a man. Let wanton tribadism -- that word seldom heard, which I feel ashamed even to utter -- freely parade itself, and let our women's chambers emulate Philaenis, disgracing themselves with Sapphic amours. And how much better that a woman should invade the provinces of male wantonness than that the nobility of the male sex should become effeminate and play the part of a woman!

29. In the midst of this intense and impassioned speech Charicles stopped with a wild fierce glint in his eyes. It seemed to me that he was also regarding his speech as a ceremony of purification against love of boys. But I, laughing quietly and turning my eyes gently towards the Athenian, said, "It was to decide a sportive piece of fun, Callicratidas, that I expected to sit as umpire, but somehow or other thanks to Charicles' vehemence I've been brought to face a more serious task. For he has shown an extraordinary degree of passion almost as though he were in the Areopagus contesting a case of murder or arson or indeed poisoning. Therefore the present moment, if any time ever did, demands that you should recall one of the speeches made to the people in the Pnyx and in this one speech of yours should expend all the resources of Athens, of Periclean persuasiveness and of the tongues of the ten orators which were marshalled against the Macedonians."

30. After waiting for a moment Callicratidas, who, judging from his expression, appeared to me to be most full of fight, began to discourse in his turn and said: "If the assembly and the law-courts were open to women and they could participate in politics, you would have been elected their general or their champion and they would have honoured you, Charicles, with bronze statues in the market-places. For hardly even those among them thought preeminent for wisdom could, if given full authority to speak, have spoken about themselves with such zeal, no, not even Telesilla, who armed herself against the Spartiates, and because of whom Ares is numbered at Argos among the gods of the women, no nor Sappho, the honey-sweet pride of Lesbos or Theano, that daughter of Pythagorean wisdom! Perhaps even Pericles could not have pleaded equally well for Aspasia. But, since it is not improper for men to speak on behalf of women, let us men also speak on behalf of men; and you, Aphrodite, be propitious. For we too honour your son, Eros.

31. I thought that our merry contest had gone as far as jest allowed but, since Charicles in his discourse has been minded also to wax philosophical on behalf of women, I have gladly seized my opportunity ; for love of males, I say, is the only activity combining both pleasure and virtue. For I would pray that near us, if it were possible, grew that plane-tree which once heard the words of Socrates, a tree more fortunate than the Academy and the Lyceum, the tree against which Phaedrus leaned, as we are told by that holy man endowed with more graces than any other. Perhaps like the oak at Dodona, that sent its sacred voice bursting forth from its branches, that tree itself, still remembering the beauty of Phaedrus, would have spoken in praise of love of boys. But that is impossible,

> "For in between there lies
> Many a shady mountain and the roaring sea,"

and we are strangers cut off in a foreign land, and Cnidus gives Charicles the advantage. Nevertheless we shall not be overcome by fear and betray the truth.

32. Only do you, heavenly spirit, lend me seasonable help, you kindly hierophant of the mysteries of friendship, Eros, who are no mischievous infant as painters light-heartedly portray you, but were already full-grown at your birth, when brought forth by the earliest source of all life. For you gave shape to everything out of dark confused shapelessness. As though you had removed a tomb burying the whole universe alike, you banished that chaos which enveloped it to the recesses of farthest Tartarus, where in truth, "Are gates of iron and thresholds of bronze," so that, chained in an impregnable prison, it may be denied any return. Spreading bright light over gloomy night you became the creator of all things both with and without life. But compounding for mortals the special gift of harmony of mind, you united their hearts with the holy sentiment of friendship, so that goodwill might grow in souls still innocent and tender and come to perfect maturity.

33. For marriage is a remedy invented to ensure man's necessary perpetuity, but only love for males is a noble duty enjoined by a philosophic spirit. Anything cultivated for aesthetic reasons in the midst of abundance is accompanied with greater honour than things which require for their existence immediate need, and beauty is in every way superior to necessity. Thus, as long as human life remained unsophisticated and the daily struggle for existence left it no leisure for improving itself, men were content to limit themselves to bare necessities, and the urgency of their day did not allow them to discover the proper way to live. But, once pressing needs were at an end and the thoughts of each succeeding generation had been released from the shackles of necessity so that they had leisure ever to devise higher things, from that time the arts gradually began to develop. What this process was like we may judge from the more perfected of the crafts. Right from the moment of their birth the earliest men had to search for a remedy against their daily hunger, and, under the duress of immediate need, prevented by their helplessness from choosing what was better, fed on any chance herb, digging up tender roots and eating mostly the fruit of the oak. But after a time this was cast before brute animals, and the careful husbandmen discovered how to sow wheat and barley and saw these renew themselves every year. And not even a madman would maintain that the fruit of the oak is superior to the ear of grain.

34. Moreover, did not men right from the start of human life, because they needed protection from the elements, skin wild beasts and clothe themselves in their woolly coats? And as refuges against the cold they thought of mountain caves or the dry hollows afforded by old roots or trees. Then, ever improving the imitative skill that started thus, they wove themselves cloaks of wool and built themselves houses, and imperceptibly the crafts that concentrated on these things, being taught by time, replaced simple fabrics with ornate garments of greater beauty, and instead of cheap cottages they devised lofty mansions of expensive marble, and painted the native ugliness of their walls with the luxuriant dyes of colour. However each of these crafts and accomplishments has, after being mute and plunged in deep forgetfulness, gradually risen, as it were, to its own bright zenith after long being set. For each man made some discovery to hand on to his successor. Then each successive recipient, by adding to what he had already learnt, made good any deficiencies.

35. Let no one expect love of males in early times. For intercourse with women was necessary so that our race might not utterly perish for lack of seed. But the manifold branches of wisdom and men's desire for this virtue that loves beauty were only with difficulty to be brought to light by time which leaves nothing unexplored, so that divine philosophy and with it love of boys might come to maturity. Do not then, Charicles, again censure this discovery as worthless because it wasn't made earlier, nor, because intercourse with women can be credited with greater antiquity than love of boys, must you think love of boys inferior. No, we must consider the pursuits that are old to be necessary, but assess as superior the later additions invented by human life when it had leisure for thought.

36. For I came very close to laughing just now when Charicles was praising irrational beasts and the lonely life of Scythians. Indeed his excessive enthusiasm for the argument almost made him regret his Greek birth. For he did not hide his words in restrained tones like a man contradicting the thesis that he maintained, but with raised voice from the full depth of his throat says, "Lions, bears, boars do not love others of their own sort but are ruled by their urge only for the female. And what's surprising in that? For the things which one would rightly choose as a result of thought, it is not possible for those that cannot reason to have because of their lack of intellect. For, if

Prometheus or else some god had endowed each animal with a human mind, they would not be satisfied with a lonely life among the mountains, nor would they find their food in each other, but just like us they would have built themselves temples and, though each making his hearth the centre of his private life, they would live as fellow-citizens governed by common laws. Is it any wonder that, since animals have been condemned by nature not to receive from the bounty of Providence any of the gifts afforded by intellect, they have with all else also been deprived of desire for males? Lions do not have such a love, because they are not philosophers either. Bears have no such love, because they are ignorant of the beauty that comes from friendship. But for men wisdom coupled with knowledge has after frequent experiments chosen what is best, and has formed the opinion that love between males is the most stable of loves.

37. Do not, therefore, Charicles, heap together courtesans' tales of wanton living and insult our dignity with unvarnished language nor count Heavenly Love as an infant, but learn better about such things though it's late in your life, and now at any rate, since you've never done so before, reflect in spite of all that Love is a twofold god who does not walk in but a single track or exert but a single influence to excite our souls; but the one love, because, I imagine, his mentality is completely childish, and no reason can guide his thoughts, musters with great force in the souls of the foolish and concerns himself mainly with yearnings for women. This love is the companion of the violence that lasts but a day and he leads men with unreasoning precipitation to their desires. But the other Love is the ancestor of the Ogygian age, a sight venerable to behold and hedged around with sanctity, and is a dispenser of temperate passions who sends his kindly breath into the minds of all. If we find this god propitious to us, we meet with a welcome pleasure which is blended with virtue. For in truth, as the tragic poet says, Love blows in two different ways, and the one name is shared by differing passions. For Shame too is a twofold goddess, with both a beneficial and a harmful role.

> Shame which to men doth mighty harm and mighty good.
> Nor yet are rivalries of but one sort; two kinds
> On earth there are; the one a man of sense would praise,
> The other's to be blamed; for different is their heart.

It need not surprise us, therefore, that passion has come to have the same name as virtue so that both unrestrained lust and sober affection are called Love.

38. Charicles may ask if I therefore think marriage worthless and banish women from this life, and if so, how we humans are to survive. Indeed, as the wise Euripides says, it would be greatly to be desired if we had no intercourse with women but, in order to provide ourselves with heirs, we went to shrines and temples and bought children for gold and silver. For we are constrained by necessity that puts a heavy yoke on our shoulders and bids us obey her. Though therefore we should by use of reason choose what is beautiful, let our need yield to necessity. Let women be ciphers and be retained merely for child-bearing; but in all else away with them, and may I be rid of them. For what man of sense could endure from dawn onwards women who beautify themselves with artificial devices, women whose true form is unshapely, but who have extraneous adornments to beguile the unsightliness of nature ?

39. If at any rate one were to see women when they rise in the morning from last night's bed, one would think a woman uglier than those beasts whose name it is inauspicious to mention early in the day. That's why they closet themselves carefully at home and let no man see them. They're surrounded by old women and a throng of maids as ugly as themselves who doctor their ill-favoured faces with an assortment of medicaments. For they do not wash off the torpor of sleep with pure clean water and apply themselves to some serious task. Instead numerous concoctions of scented powders are used to brighten up their unattractive complexions, and, as though in a public procession, each maid is entrusted with something different, with silver basins, ewers, mirrors, an array of boxes reminiscent of a chemist's shop, and jars full of many a mischief, in which she marshals dentifrices and contrivances for blackening the eyelids.

40. But most of their efforts are spent on dressing their hair. For some pass unfavourable Judgment on their own gifts from nature and, by means of pigments that can redden the hair to match the sun at noon, they dye their hair

with a yellow bloom as they do coloured wool; those who do feel satisfied with their dark locks spend their husbands' wealth on radiating from their hair almost all the perfumes of Arabia; they use iron instruments warmed in a slow flame to curl their hair perforce into woolly ringlets, and elaborately styled locks brought down to their eyebrows leave the forehead with the narrowest of spaces, while the tresses behind float proudly down to the shoulders.

41. Next they turn to flower-coloured shoes that sink into their flesh and pinch their feet and to thin veils that pass for clothes so as to excuse their apparent nakedness. But everything inside these can be distinguished more clearly than their faces except for their hideously prominent breasts which they always carry about bound like prisoners. Need I recount the scandals still more extravagant than these ? The Red Sea pearls worth many a talent that hang heavily from the ears, or the snakes round their wrists and arms, which I wish were real snakes instead of gold? Their heads are surrounded with crowns bearing a galaxy of Indian gems, and from their throats hang expensive necklaces, while gold has the misfortune to go right down to the tips of their toes, pinching any part of their ankles left naked -- though it's iron with which their legs should by rights be shackled at the ankles! When all their body has been tricked out with the deceptive beauty of a spurious comeliness, they redden their shameless cheeks by smearing on rouge so that its crimson tint may lend colour to their pale fat skins.

42. How, then, do they behave after all these preparations? They leave the house immediately and visit every god that plagues married men, though the wretched husbands do not even know the very names of some of these, be they Coliades and Genetyllides or the Phrygian goddess and the rout that commemorates an unhappy love and honours the shepherd-boy. Then follow secret initiations and suspicious all-female mysteries and, to put things bluntly, the corruption of their souls. But when they've finished with these, the moment they're home they have long baths, and, by heavens, sumptuous meals accompanied by much coyness towards the men. For when they are surfeited with gorging the dishes in front of them, and even their throats can now hold no more, they score each of the foods before them with their fingertips to taste them. Meanwhile they talk of their nights, their heterosexual slumbers, and their beds fraught with femininity, on rising from which every man immediately needs a bath.

43. These then are the signs of an orderly femalelife; but, should one wish to examine in detail the truth about the more offensive of womankind, he will curse Prometheus in real life and burst out with these words of Menander:

> "Then are not painters right when they depict
> Prometheus nailed to rocks ? With brand of fire
> But naught else good can he be credited.
> But all the gods, methinks, hate what he did,
> In fashioning females, a cursed brood,
> I swear it by the honoured gods above.
> Suppose a man her weds and taketh her to wife,
> She'll spend her time in evil furtive lusts
> Thenceforth and lovers who luxuriate
> On nuptial couch, and poisonings and spite,
> That bane and plague most terrible wherewith
> A woman all her lifetime doth consort."

Who goes in quest of boons like these? Who finds so wretched a life acceptable ?

44. We ought therefore to contrast with the evils associated with women the manly life of a boy. He rises at dawn from his unwed couch, washes away with pure water such sleep as still remains in his eyes and after securing his shirt and his mantle with pins at the shoulder "he leaves his father's hearth with eyes bent down" and without facing the gaze of anyone he meets. He is followed by an orderly company of attendants and tutors, who grip in their hands the revered instruments of virtue, not the points of a toothed comb that can caress the hair nor mirrors that without artists' aid reproduce the shapes confronting them, but behind him come many-leaved writing tablets

or books that preserve the merit of ancient deeds, along with a tuneful lyre, should he have to go to a music master.

45. But, after he has toiled zealously through all the lessons that teach the soul philosophy, and his intellect has had its fill of these benefits of a standard education, he perfects his body with noble exercises. For he interests himself in Thessalian horses. Soon, after he has broken in his youth as one does a colt, he practises in peace the pursuits of war, throwing javelins and hurling spears with unerring aim. Next come the glistening wrestlingschools, where beneath the heat of the mid-day sun his developing body is covered in dust; then comes the sweat, that pours forth from his toils in the contest, and next a quick bath and a sober meal suited to the activities that soon follow. For again he has his schoolmasters and records of deeds of old with hints for the study of such questions as what hero was brave, who is cited for his wisdom, or what men cherished justice and temperance. Such are the virtues which he uses to irrigate his soul while still tender, and, when evening brings an end to his activities, he metes out the tribute due to the necessities of his stomach, and then sleeps the sweeter, enjoying a rest that none could grudge after his exertions during the day.

46. Who would not fall in love with such a youth? Whose eyesight could be so blind, whose mental processes so stunted? How could one fail to love him who is a Hermes in the wrestling-school, an Apollo with the lyre, a horseman to rival Castor, and one who strives after the virtues of the gods with a mortal body? For my part, ye gods of heaven, I pray that it may for ever be my lot in life to sit opposite my dear one and hear close to me his sweet voice, to go out when he goes out and share every activity with him. And so a lover might well pray that his cherished one should journey to old age without any sorrow through a life free from stumbling or swerving, without having experienced at all any malicious spite of Fortune. But, if in accordance with the law governing the human body, illness should lay its hand on him, I shall ail with him when he is weak, and, when he puts out to sea through stormy waves, I shall sail with him. And, should a violent tyrant bind him in chains, I shall put the same fetters around myself. All who hate him will be my enemies and those well disposed to him shall I hold dear. Should I see bandits or foemen rushing upon him, I would arm myself even beyond my strength, and if he dies, I shall not bear to live. I shall give final instructions to those I love next best after him to pile up a common tomb for both of us, to unite my bones with his and not to keep even our dumb ashes apart from each other.

47. Nor will you find my love for those who deserve it to be the first to write such things; rather were these the laws given by the wellnigh divine wisdom of the heroes, who till their dying day breathed love of friendship. Phocis united Orestes to Pylades right from their infancy. Taking the lovegod as the mediator of their emotions for each other, they sailed together as it were on the same vessel of life. Both did away with Clytemnestra as though both were sons of Agamemnon, by both of them was Aegisthus slain. Pylades it was who suffered the more from the Avengers who hounded Orestes, and he stood trial along with him in court. Nor did they restrict their affectionate friendship to the limits of Hellas, but sailed to Scythia at the very ends of the earth, one of them afflicted, the other ministering to him. At any rate, as soon as they set foot on the land of the Tauri, the Fury of matricides was there to welcome the strangers, and, when the natives stood around them, the one was struck to the ground by his usual madness and lay there, but Pylades

> "Did wipe away the foam and tend his frame
> And shelter him with fine well-woven robe"'

thus showing the feelings not merely of a lover but also of a father. When at any rate it had been decided that, while one remained to be killed, the other should depart for Mycenae to bear a letter, each wished to remain for the sake of the other, considering that he himself lived in the survival of his friend. But Orestes refused to take the letter, claiming Pylades was the fitter person to do so, and showed himself almost to be the lover rather than the beloved.

> "For 'tis a burden sore to me if he be slain,
> For I am captain of this enterprise."

And shortly afterwards he says

> "The message give to him,
> For him I'll send to Argos; he will thrive
> But whoso will may take my life."

48. This too is the case generally. For, when the honourable love inbred in us from childhood matures to the manly age that is now capable of reason, the object of our longstanding affection gives love in return and it's difficult to detect which is the lover of which, since the image of the lover's tenderness has been reflected from the loved one as though from a mirror. Why then do you censure this as being an exotic indulgence of our times, though it is an ordinance enacted by divine laws and a heritage that has come down to us? We have been glad to receive it and we tend its shrine with a pure heart. For that man is truly blessed according to the verdict of the wise,

> "Whoso hath youthful lads and whole-hooved steeds;
> And that old man doth age with greatest ease
> Whom youths do love."

The teaching of Socrates and his famous tribunal of virtue were honoured by the Delphic tripod, for the Pythian god uttered an oracle of truth,

> "Of all men Socrates the wisest is."

For along with the other discoveries with which he benefited human life did he not also welcome love of boys as the greatest of boons?

49. One should love youths as Alcibiades was loved by Socrates who slept like a father with him under the same cloak. And for my part I would most gladly add to the end of my discourse the words of Callimachus as a message to all:

> "May you who cast your longing eyes on youths
> So love the young as Erchius bid you do,
> That in its men your city may be blessed."

Knowing this, young men, be temperate when you approach virtuous boys. Do not for the sake of a brief pleasure squander lasting affection, nor till you've reached manhood put on show counterfeit feelings of affection, but worship Heavenly Love and keep your emotions constant from boyhood to old .age. For those who love thus, having nothing disgraceful on their conscience, find their lifetime sweetest and after their death their glorious report goes out to all men. If it's right to believe the children of philosophy, the heavens await men with these ideals after their stay on earth. By entering a better life at death they have immortality as the reward for their virtue."

50. After Callicratidas had delivered this very spirited sermon, Charicles tried to speak for a second time but I stopped him; for it was now time to return to the ship. They pressed me to pronounce my opinion, but, after weighing up for a short time the speeches of both, I said: "Your words, my friends, do not seem to me to he hurried, thoughtless improvisations, but give clear proof of continued and, by heaven, concentrated thought. For

of all the possible arguments there's hardly one you've left for another to use. And, though your experience of the world is great, it is surpassed by your eloquence, so that I for one could wish, if it were possible, to become Theramenes, the Turncoat, so that you could both be victorious and walk off on equal terms. However, since I do not think you'll let the matter be, and I myself am resolved not to be exercised on the same topic during the voyage, I shall give the verdict that has struck me as the fairest.

51. Marriage is a boon and a blessing to men when it meets with good fortune, while the love of boys, that pays court to the hallowed dues of friendship, I consider to be the privilege only of philosophy. Therefore all men should marry, but let only the wise be permitted to love boys, for perfect virtue grows least of all among women. And you must not be angry, Charicles, if Corinth yields to Athens."

52. After giving this decision hurriedly in a few brief words out of regard for my friend, I rose to my feet. For I saw that he was utterly dejected, almost like one condemned to death. But the Athenian leapt up joyously with a gleeful expression on his face and started to stalk about in front of us most triumphantly, just as if, one would have thought, he had defeated the Persian fleet at Salamis. I derived a further benefit from my verdict when he entertained us to a magnificent feast to celebrate his victory. For his behaviour had in other ways, too, shown him to be generous of spirit. As for Charicles, I consoled him quietly by repeatedly expressing my great admiration for his eloquence and his able defence of the more awkward cause.

53. Well, thus ended our stay in Cnidus and our conversation in the sanctuary of the goddess with its combination of gay earnestness and cultured fun. But now, Theomnestus, you who have evoked these old memories of mine must tell me how you would have decided, if you had been judge.

THEOMNESTUS

By heaven, do you think I'm a Melitides or Coroebus to cast a vote in opposition to your just verdict? For through my intense enjoyment of your narrative I thought I was in Cnidus, almost imagining this small chamber to be that temple. But nevertheless, seeing that nothing said on a festive day is unseemly, and any jesting, even if carried to excess, is thought in keeping with the holiday spirit, I must say I admired the solemnity of the very highbrow speeches evoked by love of boys, except that I didn't think it very agreeable to spend all day with a youth suffering the punishment of Tantalus, and, though the waters of beauty are, as it were, almost lapping against my eyes, to endure thirst when one can help oneself to water. For it's not enough to look at the loved one or to listen to his voice as he sits facing you, but love has, as it were, made itself a ladder of pleasure, and has for its first step that of sight, so that it may see the beloved, and, once it beholds, it wishes to approach and to touch. If it only touches with but the fingertips, the waves of enjoyment run into the whole body. Once easily achieving this, love attempts the third stage and tries a kiss, not making it a violent one at first, but lightly bringing lips close to lips so that they part before completing full contact, without leaving the slightest cause for suspicion. Thus it adjusts itself to the success gained and melts into ever more importunate embraces, sometimes gently opening the mouth and leaving neither hand idle. For open embraces of the beloved when clothed give mutual pleasure; or else the furtive hand wantonly glides down into the bosom and squeezes for a moment the breasts swollen past their normal size and makes a smooth sweep to grasp with the fingers the belly throbbing full spate with passion, and thereafter the early down of adolescence, and

> "But why recount the thing one should not tell ?

Once love has gained so much liberty it begins warmer work. Then it makes a start with the thighs and, to quote the comic poet, "strikes the target."

54. May I for my part find it my lot to love boys in this way. But may the airy talkers and those who raise their philosophic brows temple-high and even higher, beguile the ignorant with the speciousness of their solemn phrases. For Socrates was as devoted to love as anyone and Alcibiades, once he had lain down beneath the same mantle with him, did not rise unassailed. Don't be surprised at that. For not even the affection of Achilles for Patroclus was limited to having him seated opposite "waiting until Aeacides should cease his song." No, pleasure

was the mediator even of their friendship. At any rate, when Achilles was lamenting the death of Patroclus, his unrestrained feelings made him burst out with the truth and say,

> "The converse of our thighs my tears do mourn
> With duteous piety "

Those whom the Greeks call "revellers" I think to be nothing but ostentatious lovers. Perhaps someone will assert this is a shameful thing to say, but, by Aphrodite of Cnidus, it's the truth.

LYCINUS

My dear Theomnestus, I won't tolerate your laying the foundation of a third discourse, for this one should hear only on a holiday, and further talk should be banished far from my ears. Let us not linger any longer, but go out to the market-place. For it's now the time when the fire should be lit in honour of Heracles. It's a pleasant sight and reminds those present of what he suffered on Oeta.